Valerie Trueblood

February 22, 2013

ECED 343: Pre-Primary Internship

Professor Shiffman

*Service Learning Project: Math and Science Night*

For this project, I found an event at my Professional Development School, College Gardens, called Math and Science Night. My fellow interns at College Gardens and I took on this project together, deciding to offer our assistance in whatever was needed to enforce the activities at this event. An ESOL teacher, Wendy Eldred, at our school was in charge of the night, and when we contacted her she was excited about our offer of assistance. Right away, she had us promoting the upcoming event. We performed a science experiment involving candy hearts moving and bubbling in club soda during the Kindergarten and First Grade lunches to give the students a preview of what they would see and do if they came to Math and Science Night. This event targeted all of the students and the students’ parents – it was advertised as a fun and educational way to spend time together.

After we had promoted the event at the lunches (Mrs. Eldred supplied us with all materials), we planned on what we would do for the actual event. I was assigned to come up with an activity involving candy and patterns, and was told I would be given a table to head up come the event. Science (which would be messier) would be in the cafeteria, and Math, which I would be a part of, would be in the Gymnasium. Students who completed activities at our booth would get a Golden ticket (the theme of the night was Charlie and the Chocolate Factory/Willy Wonka), and if they got a certain number of tickets they would get a prize.

I chose this event to help out with because it was an interesting way to get students excited about learning. In particular, I wanted to see different ways of getting children excited about Math. Science is easier to get students excited about because there are endless possibilities. However, with Math, it takes a little more brainstorming on the teacher’s part for different ways of making it as fun and exciting as Science. After hearing about different activities that can be done with it to get children excited about learning and doing it (and implementing one myself), I was able to learn some great teaching strategies in conjunction with my volunteered time. There were a few events we could have chosen to be a part of for this project, but this one stood out because it was a great idea for meshing the community with the school, and was a great way to show students that learning can take place outside of the classroom.

The night itself was a lot of fun. Hundreds of students with their parents showed up and trickled into the Gym where I was stationed for my Math pattern activity. Set up on my table were sheets with suggested patterns to make (i.e. ABAB, AABAAB, ABCABC) and the students could chose a pattern and replicate it with candy. The candy itself was a great draw-in factor for the students, but when they found out they could not eat the candy, they still had a lot of fun doing the patterns! The participants ranged from little siblings of students who are not even in elementary school yet to fifth graders who raced each other seeing who could finish every pattern first. The students who got the most from it I believe were the pre-primary students, however. These students needed a little scaffolding to be able to complete or continue a pattern, and they would get it either from their parents or me. It was great to see students learning while having fun and spending time with their families. This event allowed parents to come into the school and to connect with it, the staff, and their children in a relaxing atmosphere, and it succeeded in making stronger connections between families of students and the school.

This experience affected me professionally because I see the value of giving my time to my school. Events like this one are great to build connections with students and families as well as to promote fun ways of learning in and out of the classroom. I am now eager to see what other events are coming up that I can help out with, because the things I gain from such experiences are extremely valuable. On a more personal note, this event was simply fun! I liked seeing three and four year olds attempt to make patterns, and then (with a little assistance), seeing them light up as they made their first one! I also liked seeing parents watch on with smiles on their faces as their children made these different patterns. Students were on all levels in their experience with this math concept, and seeing a child try until he or she succeeds is always an inspiration. Even the older students who proclaimed to me that this was “easy” found fun in trying the hardest pattern on the table or competing with each other to come up with patterns the fastest. These were the students who would come back to our booth multiple times throughout the night. They found doing Math to be fun, and that is exactly the kind of attitude I want students in my classroom to have as we go through our journey of learning together.